DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 220 CE 079 172

AUTHOR	Schuyler, Gwyer
TITLE	Merging Economic and Environmental Concerns through Ecopreneurship. Digest Number 98-8.
INSTITUTION	Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City, MO. Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership.
PUB DATE	1998-12-02
NOTE	4p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: <http://www.celcee.edu>.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Business Administration Education; *Conservation (Environment); Ecology; Economic Opportunities; *Endangered Species; *Entrepreneurship; Environmental Education; Free Enterprise System; Natural Resources; *Tourism; *Wildlife Management

ABSTRACT

Ecopreneurs are entrepreneurs whose business efforts are not only driven by profit, but also by a concern for the environment. Ecopreneurship, also known as environmental entrepreneurship and eco-capitalism, is becoming more widespread as a new market-based approach to identifying opportunities for improving environmental quality and capitalizing upon them in the private sector for profit. It is defined as entrepreneurs using business tools to preserve open space, develop wildlife habitat, save endangered species, and improve environmental quality. Most ecopreneurial endeavors begin at the local level, addressing a community environmental problem or need. An example is the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, which has a mission to foster peaceful and productive coexistence between wildlife and ranching. Another example is a Chamber of Commerce that has set up an operation to clean for free the paddlefish local fishermen catch in the Yellowstone River in return for the paddlefish eggs the fishermen had usually discarded and left to rot. Half of the proceeds from sale of the caviar go to fund community projects and half go to the state for paddlefish research and management. Examples of ecopreneurial tourism are the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center outside of Dallas, a for-profit corporation that provides a sanctuary for endangered animals that serve as the main attraction to tourists, and state parks that provide rental services and mail-order catalogs of novelty items. (Web sites for related organizations are summarized.) (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 434 220

Merging Economic and Environmental Concerns through Ecopreneurship Digest Number 98-8

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

G Schnuffer

CE079172

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CELCEE

Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership Clearinghouse on Entrepreneurship Education
http://www.celcee.edu

Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership
4801 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110-2046
(888) 423-5233

Digest

December 2, 1998

DIGEST Number 98-8

Merging Economic and Environmental Concerns Through Ecopreneurship

by Gwyer Schuyler

A new term has been coined for entrepreneurs whose business efforts are not only driven by profit, but also by a concern for the environment. They are called ecopreneurs. Also known as environmental entrepreneurship and eco-capitalism, ecopreneurship is becoming more widespread. This digest will briefly discuss the context in which ecopreneurship has blossomed and present examples ofecopreneurship. In conclusion, organizations concerned with ecopreneurship, and more generally, the linkage between the economy and the environment, will be reviewed.

Ecopreneurship has grown as a new strategy within the environmental movement. For the past twenty-five years, attention to the environment has been directed through laws and regulations (Anderson & Leal, 1997; Baden & Nooman, 1996). This regulatory approach used the threat of penalty to further the environmental cause. While there has been progress through this approach, some in the environmental community have experimented with economic incentives and market-based approaches to alleviate environmental problems. Ecopreneurship is one market-based approach in which opportunities are identified for improving environmental quality, and then these opportunities are capitalized upon in the private sector for profit.

Anderson and Leal (1997) define ecopreneurship as "entrepreneurs using business tools to preserve open space, develop wildlife habitat, save endangered species, and generally improve environmental quality" (p. 3). Most ecopreneurial endeavors begin at the local level, addressing a community environmental problem or need. While the authors stipulate that ecopreneurship is not a panacea for global environmental problems, they point out how ecopreneurial solutions to small, local problems can "provide the foundation for thinking innovatively about bigger problems" (p. 4).

Ecopreneurship comes in many different forms. Some environmentalists may be suspicious of these approaches altogether, but one could argue that when there is a demand, the demand will be filled whether or not the business is environmentally friendly. From this standpoint, ecopreneurship is a "lesser of two evils." Moreover, in light of Hawken's (1992) poignant message that traditional business is destroying the world, ecopreneurship offers hope that business can instead play a role in restoring the planet (Hawken, 1992). What follow are examples of ecopreneurial approaches related to ranching, food sales and tourism and recreation that have been created to reap both profits and benefits for the environment.

Examples of Ecopreneurship

A Truce between Wildlife and Ranchers

One ecopreneurial endeavor, the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, has a mission to foster peaceful and productive coexistence between wildlife and ranching. In accordance, a wildlife research center has been created in conjunction with a profitable ranch. Serving as a model for other ranching operations, the Roosevelt Ranch helps maintain the balance between ranchers and animals that prey on livestock. By bridging this sometimes hostile relationship through wildlife research and management, the Roosevelt Ranch applies its ranching profit to a search for workable solutions that both the wildlife and the ranchers can live with (Baden, 1993).

Turning Waste into Food

Joseph Frank Crisafulli noticed local fisherman tossing aside the eggs of the paddlefish when they cleaned their catch. Every year, several tons of eggs were left on the banks of the Yellowstone River to rot. Crisafulli knew that paddlefish are the main source of American caviar, so he requested the help of the local Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce recognized the financial possibilities, and set up an operation to clean the

fishermen's fish for free in return for the paddlefish eggs. In 1990, the first season of the program's operation, workers cleaned 1,000 paddlefish and processed over 8,000 pounds of roe. Overall, the project has grossed $1,000,000 from caviar over a seven year period, with half of the proceeds going to fund community projects and half going to the state for paddlefish research and management (Anderson & Leal, 1997; "Environmental Entrepreneurs," 1996).

Attracting Tourists for the Environment

The Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, outside of Dallas, is a for-profit corporation that provides a sanctuary for endangered species, such as the white rhino, the red wolf, and the cheetah. The animals also serve as the main attraction to tourists. A drive-through tour, overnight "safari" camping, and a bed and breakfast lodge led to 1992 revenues topping $2.2 million. By catering to tourists, the owners of Fossil Rim can undertake invaluable research and breeding programs to save endangered species (Anderson & Leal, 1997; "Environmental Entrepreneurs," 1996).

Another example of ecopreneurial tourism and recreation is being utilized by state parks. Shrinking budgets and growing maintenance problems have demanded that parks become creative. In Ohio, parks have begun to provide rental services, supplying cots, coolers, cookstoves and tepees to campers. From these efforts, park revenues have almost doubled over six years. The Texas Park system has gone even further, establishing a mail-order catalog of cowboy hats, carriages, and other novelty items. Says one administrator for the Texas parks, "The spirit of the entrepreneurial budget system won't ever go away. . . . We can't go back to the old way. state money just isn't there any more." Out of necessity, state parks are becoming ecopreneurs in order to maintain their park lands (Ewing, 1997).

Conclusion

Surveys have shown that Americans are concerned with the environment. For example, three-fourths consider the environment a "high" priority and four out of five Americans consider themselves to be environmentalists or sympathetic to environmentalists (Baden & Noonan, 1996). This positive climate suggests many possibilities for ecopreneurs to both make a difference in the environmental movement and make a profit. This digest has profiled several unique ecopreneurial projects, but there are undoubtedly many untapped avenues for new projects. In response, educators in environmental and business fields should incorporate related ecopreneurship lessons into their courses (Samson, 1994). The message should be made clear that wherever there is an environmental need or problem, there is a potential ecopreneurial, symbiotic remedy.

Related Organizations

PERC, which stands for Political Economy Research Center, is a think-tank in Bozeman, Montana that focuses on market solutions to environmental problems. It has been at the forefront of what has become known as free market environmentalism. To learn more about PERC, visit its website at http://www.perc.org.

FREE, the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment, based in Seattle, also looks at the intersection of the market and ecology. This organization develops environmental policies and programs and offers conferences, workshops and written publications to spread their message of the compatibility of conservation and capitalism. Their web address is http://www.free-eco.org.

The Green Institute, located in Minneapolis, describes itself as a nonprofit economic development organization focused on sustainable enterprise. They sponsor many projects directed at simultaneously creating jobs and promoting environmentally sound business practices. They offer technical assistance to ecopreneurs and are opening the Phillips Eco-Enterprise Center, a business incubator facility to cultivate the environmental sector and sustainable commercial development. To learn more, visit http://www.greeninstitute.org.

References

Anderson, T. L., & Leal, D. R. (1997). Enviro-capitalists: Doing good while doing well. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. c9824-74

Baden, J. A. (1993). Looking for a Bill Gates of Environmental Policy. Available: http://www.free-eco.org/free/SP93/Entrepreneurship93.html. c9824-66

Baden, J. A., & Noonan, D. S. (1996). The evolving environmentalism. Available: http://www.free-eco.org/free/pubs/DDEE.html. c9824-65

Ewing, T. (1997, February 11). Meet the new entrepreneur: State parks. Available: http://www.mmnet/~perc/parkwsj.htm. c9824-63

Samson, K. J. (1994, Nov.-Dec.). Teaching environmental entrepreneurship. In Business, 16(6), 32-34. c9824-60

CELCEE Document Number

CELCEE is an adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse funded by the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring institutions, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE